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CHAPTER 5. DRIVER TRAINING FOR THE HANDICAPPED VETERAN

5.01 STATEMENT OF POLICY

a. Driver training for the handicapped, within VA (Department of Veterans Affairs), is designed to provide eligible veterans and certain military personnel with instruction, practice and evaluation of the special adaptive equipment needed to independently operate a motor vehicle. VA facilities will adhere to the regulations of the State Department of Motor Vehicles.

b. All VA driver training programs will be authorized by VA Central Office with concurrence by Regional and medical center Directors (see par. 5.07).

5.02 ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT

RMS (Rehabilitation Medicine Service) will be responsible for administering the Driver Training Program.

5.03 BUDGET AND FISCAL

a. Existing driver training centers are issued an annual operating fund to be used for the VA Driver Training Program.

(1) Newly established centers must utilize local Medical Care Funds to maintain their programs.

(2) Within the total amount provided, medical centers will be expected to cover all future medical care requirements of the program; this includes money for:

- (a) Maintenance and fuel,
- (b) Purchase of additional equipment,
- (c) Teaching materials,
- (d) Replacement vehicles, and
- (e) Any other purpose with the exceptions of research and staff education.

NOTE: This will preclude requesting additional funds from VA Central Office.

b. Funds may be withdrawn and redistributed to other driver training centers based on periodic reviews of each program. VA medical centers should establish a central funding point to facilitate the reporting of program costs as directed by VA Central Office.

5.04 REPLACEMENT OF DRIVER TRAINING VEHICLES

a. VA medical centers with designated driver training programs may purchase replacement or additional vehicles by utilizing monies from their annual operating fund. Replacement of currently owned vehicles should be processed through the Facility Replacement Program. Selection of the type and size of replacement vehicle should be determined locally, based on need and previous history of training and disability type.

b. Suitable training vehicles which are received as loans or gifts from service organizations and automobile dealerships may be utilized in a VA Driver Training Program, but only as a supplement to the GSA (General Services Administration) purchased vehicle.

(1) Loaned vehicles must be insured by the individual or company which loans the vehicle to the agency.

(2) The use of a loaned vehicle, at any medical center, will be approved by VA Central Office in accordance with VA regulations.

5.05 AUTOMOBILE AND ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

a. The basic automobile utilized in driver training should have certain specifications as listed:

(1) A sedan (current Federal Specification Number).

(2) Compact or mid-size model sedan, two-door.

(3) Customarily furnished equipment as:

(a) Windshield washer and wipers with adjustable speed,

(b) Heater,

(c) Courtesy lighting,

(d) Lamps and switches, and

(e) Clock.

(4) Automatic transmission.

(5) Power locked doors.

(6) Power disc brakes.

(7) Power windows.

(8) Power steering.

(9) Air-conditioning.

(10) A four or six cylinder engine.

(11) A minimum 70 ampere battery.

(12) A minimum 50 ampere alternator.

b. Optional equipment includes:

(1) Front seat with controls for six-way power movement for driver. NOTE: Latches are to be located at the top of the backrest and automatic unlocking seat devices are acceptable.

- (2) Right and left remote control outside mirrors.
- (3) Horn switch (not to be imbedded in the steering wheel).
- (4) Sufficient space between the rear of the front seat and the back seat to allow for the loading, storage and unloading of a wheelchair. NOTE: Seat belt, shoulder harnesses and their hardware should be placed to allow for easy access of a wheelchair.
- (5) Tilt adjustable steering wheel.
- (6) Dual control foot brakes (installed by the VA medical center staff).
- (7) Deicer and defogger on rear windows.
- (8) Rear window wiper.
- (9) Belts, shoulder (must not be impact type) on chest and lap.
- (10) Arm rests.
- (11) Vinyl upholstery.
- (12) State of California emission controls on all vehicles issued in that State.

NOTE: The automobile should be delivered FOB (free on board) destination to nearest dealer who will prepare the automobile for drive-a-way delivery.

c. Adaptive equipment will be purchased and installed by the RMS or Engineering Service, or by local contract. Purchases costing less than \$1,000 (retail) need not be approved by program officials in VA Central Office. Items that should be considered for use in these vehicles include:

- (1) Hand control with dimmer switch and horn button (reversible i.e., right and left of steering column).
- (2) Ignition key adapter.
- (3) Dimmer switch on steering post (for left foot amputees).
- (4) Transfer bar inside (portable).
- (5) Driver cuffs (inserts in spinner base).
- (6) Assorted safety belts.
- (7) Panavision rear view mirrors.
- (8) Parking brake extension.
- (9) Left foot gas pedal.
- (10) Right turn signal adapter.
- (11) Shift lever extension.

- (12) Spinner mount receivers for various assistive devices.
- (13) Gutter hook or swing-in handle.
- (14) Driver training sign.
- (15) Slide boards (with varied designs).
- (16) First aid kits and fracture splints.

d. Due to the specialized needs of the patient user and the adaptive equipment technology, it is necessary that the VA driver training instructor be involved in the entire purchase, selection and installation process of this equipment.

5.06 INSURANCE COVERAGE

To ensure that adequate liability insurance coverage is provided, an annual contract has been established by VA Central Office to automatically cover the program in any VA medical center where there is approved driver training. Coverage under this contract is for bodily injury and property damage. Employee and patient insurance coverage is automatically assumed by VA.

5.07 DRIVER TRAINING INSTRUCTORS

The individual assigned as driver training instructor will be a professional rehabilitation therapist with appropriate credentials to teach driver training. The instructor should be certified as a driver instructor in the state in which the medical center is located. In addition, driver training instructors must have received training in the VA approved instructors orientation course, or its equivalent. Exceptions to these requirements must be submitted to VA Central Office (117B) for approval.

5.08 QUARTERLY REPORT

The Driver Training Program Report (original and one copy) should reach VA Central Office (13/117B) not later than 10 work days following the end of the reporting period (quarter). This report (RCS 10-0099) should be submitted on VA Form 10-4790, Driving Training Program Report.

